

Conflict as a Factor in the Emergence of Reversing Language Attitudes: The Case of Speech Communities in Darfur

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Abstract: This paper explores types of language attitude developed towards Arabic and native languages by ethnolinguistic communities, including the internally displaced persons, in the context of conflict in South Darfur State, Sudan. Qualitative data were elicited from focus group discussions, face-to-face interviews and observation. Quantitative data were gathered by a questionnaire. The results show that there is a growing positive attitude towards native languages. Moreover, a growing aversion towards Arabic is also found, in particular among the communities characterised by ethnolinguistic vitality. The findings suggest that the ongoing conflict has had a knock-on effect on the emergence of these types of attitudes.

1. Introduction

Had it not been the exclusivist minority language policies imposed in the pre-and post-independent eras in Sudan, English, and Arabic consecutively, could not have been the sole or, at intermittent intervals, both national/official languages. Although spoken by many communities vastly scattered across the country, minority languages have been retreating in all domains. This has not come from a vacuum. In the colonial times, Arabic was the envy of the British language policymakers. English was empowered to take the lead, instead. In post-independent times, however, the situation was reversed when national language policies ensued. Arabic was reintroduced, not only in reaction to the yesteryear colonial policies, but on ideological backgrounds as well. Amidst their calls for reversion, and being too busy undoing the cultural, social and political conventions established by the colonial powers, language

policymakers spared no room for indigenous languages to prosper in Sudan. Thus, they were marooned in desperate situations where their speakers have to succumb to the firmly imposed linguistic, social and cultural arabicisation processes. Positive attitudes towards Arabic, the national language and the bearer of the would-be core culture and identity, have been inculcated into the minds of all the Sudanese people regardless of their linguistic backgrounds.

More than five decades have passed since the independence of Sudan in 1956, during which well-tailored arabicisation processes have been experienced by native language speakers. By lapse of time, it is expected that indigenous language-use should have retreated to insignificant domains and, instead, positive attitudes towards Arabic should have reached an irreversible point. This, however, has never always been the case among the speech communities studied in this

paper. They have been trying to make a comeback amidst the current conflict since its eruption in 2003. Conceived in the premise of ethnolinguistic habitus theory of Bourdieu (1991), Arabic in Sudan would not be instrumental for accessing economic gains, and upward cultural and social mobility, but also – though arguably – should be an indispensable source symbolising national unity and pride.

Being the first of its kind, both in terms of the area investigated and the social milieu in which Darfur is being embroiled, the present paper aims to explore the extent to which the current conflict has had a knock-on effect on the development of sentimentalities to indigenous languages as well as on the emergence of a perceived aversion towards Arabic. To do this, a sample was identified, representing an array of ten ethnolinguistic communities drawn from Nyala town and the satellite internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps. Several focus group discussions, interviews and a language attitude-based questionnaire were used to gather data in a period spanning from late 2011 to early 2012.

2. A background on language attitude

2.1 Theoretical perspectives

Generally, studies on language attitude primarily focus on attitudes towards the language itself, speakers of the language, and maintenance/development of the

language (Fasold, 1994). Studies on understanding the mechanisms negotiated to develop certain attitudes towards a particular language spring from the premise of Bourdieu's linguistic habitus theory (1991). Language, this theory maintains, shapes its speakers' perception of the world through what is called the symbolic power, thus, "making people see and believe, of conforming or transforming the vision of the world and, thereby, take action on the world..." (*ibid*: 171). The aforementioned three types of language attitudes can mutually interact to either produce favouring or daunting language situations among communities speaking different languages. Once these situations are established, the likelihood of their continuity can be high as long as the favourable factors persist, and vice versa. That whether or not this can be (un)qualified in the context of the present study is the thesis of this paper, in particular when conflict is taken as an extraneous factor.

Amidst the current conflict, the whole community in Darfur, including ethnic groups speaking Arabic exclusively, has undergone an unprecedented ethnicisation processes. Consequently, developing positive attitudes towards indigenous languages has become a very yielding mechanism for strengthening interethnic bonds across almost all groups. When such a situation became a wholesale

propensity, revitalisation of the local languages in the study area played a major role in the construction of micro-ethnic identities and cultures in lieu of the national core identity and culture (Garri, 2012). Thus, the assumption that, as is the case in many countries, national coherence can be consolidated by creation of linguistic unity (Kramsch, 1998 and May, 2008) fails to establish itself in many regions across the globe, where linguistic minorities are the vanguards in their homelands. For example, Woolard (2003) argues that subordination, repression, and long exclusion from official institutions and public use of Catalan in Spain did not prevent its revitalisation by means of violence. In such cases, an in-group may lobby to revitalise the bastion of its power – language. It is on such grounds that sentimentality to and revitalisation of, in the case of Darfur, positive attitudes towards indigenous languages is established. The pacing shift to Arabic is confirmed by a wealth of research in Sudan; for example, by Miller and Abu-Manga (1992), Jahalla (2001), Mugaddam (2002 and 2006), Idris (2007) and Khalifa (2008). This shift is primarily attributed to demographic, social, economic and linguistic factors. However, whether or not attitudes held towards Arabic are genuinely positive have seldom been substantiated by any other research in Sudan. Nor are there studies on whether positive attitudes towards the lost or maintained

native languages are truly internalised. That is why, this paper argues, the perceived aversion towards Arabic which is emerging among the communities under study is taking place unnoticed by linguists. On the face of it, this argument renders little significance. Deep down there, however, it is not devoid of a workable syllogism. It is understandable that, even among disempowered language-speakers, there might appear an internalised language-based stigmatisation towards their own language which comes from within the disadvantaged language speakers themselves. Negative language attitudes developed this way will more quickly result in a shift to the stronger language. The current situation of native languages in Sudan is a perfect model. However, this can be a spatio-temporal shift, an instance that I would rather call a *pragmatic temporal passivity* to one's own language rather than an internalised *negative attitude*. The latter attitude implies an established negative attitude similar to that of the Hong Kong parents who took to streets in resistance to the declaration of Cantonese as a national language in China (Joseph, 2004).

2.2 Literature review

Research on language attitude in Sudan is, too often than not, either given little room or embedded within studies on language maintenance and shift. Although studies on language attitude are

bulky, they are often narrowly approached and from perspectives different from the present paper's.

Corbett (2012) and Garri (2012) found in Nyala and Al-Fasher that new ethnolinguistic identities and language attitudes were progressively underway in favour of native languages, though Arabic was not so apparently disfavoured by native language speakers. The conflict factor was accounted the major factor in the development of these attitudes. Change in language attitude may be associated with social or psychological factors whereby minorities are stigmatised for speaking their languages. Bangeni and Kapp (2007) found in South Africa universities that Black students kept low profiles with those who spoke English fluently. Instead, they preferred speaking in their native languages to revitalise the symbolic significance of their native languages. Similarly, Dada (2007) found in Nigeria that while Yoruba was favoured for reasons of cultural continuity, English was favoured for the sake of national unity.

Other studies also explored the extent to which language attitudes and ideologies are crisscrossing. Trenchs-Parera and Newman (2009) found that the bilingual autonomous communities and immigrants in Barcelona, Spain, were developing six types of language attitudes and identities. On the one extreme, there were the "parochial Catalans" who saw their language attitude and identity as exclusively fixed to

Catalan vis-à-vis the "parochial Spanish" participants who saw their language attitude and identity as exclusively fixed to Spanish. Next appeared two groups adopting "mixed Catalan" and "mixed Spanish" language attitudes and identities. The last two groups adopted either a "cosmopolitan Catalan" or a "cosmopolitan Spanish" to express dual language attitudes. As for the immigrants, their language attitudes and identities were, compared to the locals', found to be inconsistent.

Miller and Abu-Manga (1992) Mugaddam (2002) and Idris (2007) also explored the situation of local language maintenance, preference and use of Arabic among indigenous language-speakers in Sudan. Their findings suggested that, in varying degrees, preference to Arabic was a common trend among the communities studied. Besides its instrumentality, social, cultural and economic reasons were the major factors enhancing the development of positive propensities to Arabic. In the latter two studies, positive attitudes towards native languages were also documented.

3 Methodology

A total of 829 respondents and interviewees were drawn from ten ethnolinguistic communities living in Nyala, the capital of South Darfur State. These were the Fur, Zaghawa, Daju, Fulani, Borgo, Borno, Hausa, Jebel, Masalit and a group of Arabs speaking miscellaneous indigenous languages. Except the Fulani and

Hausa who mostly settled in Nyala, the majority of the other communities were predominantly rural sedentary, but amidst the current conflict they either settled in Nyala town or remained languishing across scattered camps known as 'sangaaraat' /sɔŋga:ra:t/ (sing. 'sangaara' /sɔŋga:rɔ/), used to refer to the miserable squatting shacks inhabited by the internally displaced persons).

Three types of sample categories were identified: 711 respondents to a thirteen-item questionnaire, 112 discussants who participated in focus group discussions and twenty interviewees. Except for the first sample, which was randomly selected, the latter two were purposive samples. The questionnaire was primarily devised after those used by Gardner and Lambert (1972) and Keech (1972), which were thoroughly redeveloped by Bourhis *et al.* (1981) who named it the *subjective vitality questionnaire for ethnolinguistic groups*. Ever since, similar questionnaires were developed, modified, adapted and employed by several researchers; namely, White & Curtis (1990), Baker (1992), Goldschmidt (2003) Ehala & Zabrodska (2011) and Escandel (2011). With minor changes, the present researcher imported some items from Gardner's and Lambert's (1972) questionnaire, in particular items on instrumentality of language and attitudes. In addition, some items from questionnaires used by

Miller and Abu-Manga (1992), Mugaddam (2002) and Dada (2007) were also capitalised on, after adaptations, to design the current questionnaire.

Items of the questionnaire were divided into four parts. These were so divided to demonstrate the informants' demographical information, linguistic profiles (including language attitude, the perceived role native languages played in ethnolinguistic culture and identity construction, and, finally, how consciously the respondents or discussants were getting involved in the making of ethnolinguistic identities. It is noteworthy that findings reached by the third and fourth group of questions are overlooked in this paper. Instead, with the interviewees and focus groups discussants, questions similar to those in the corresponding items in the questionnaire were used to elucidate the relevant data. Observation was a tool that I most capitalised on to collect my data.

To make data gathering procedures easy, I trained eight students from different ethnic backgrounds studying in the University of Zalingei to help in administering the questionnaire and recruiting the focus group discussants. The data collectors were trained and made familiar with the data gathering procedures in the camps independently. The same trained data collectors also helped in facilitating and eliciting data from focus groups discussions. Using a

snowball sampling technique, I conducted the in-depth interviews myself, however.

Data obtained from the questionnaires were statistically processed by Social Package for Social Science (SPSS), whereas the data gleaned from the interviews, focus group discussions and observation were treated by using Wolcott's (1994) qualitative data treatment processes, i.e., employing descriptive, analytic and interpretative processes manually, simultaneously.

4 Data analysis, results and discussion

4.1 Language attitude

In this paper, terms *taking pride in language* and *language use for showing self-assertion* are interchangeably used instead of *language attitude* or *language preference* respectively, which are employed in almost all the research done on language maintenance and shift in Sudan. I have done this because the latter terms are employed to examine which language(s) the investigated communities **ostensibly** perceived most *appealing to their specific psychological and social tendencies* in the contexts in which the studies were carried out. This is known as an objective approach. Conversely, the terms used in this study are meant to show how much an indigenous language speaker **truly** takes pride in his or her language even if the preference of the dominant languages is imposed by

social, economic or demographic realities. This is a subjective approach to questions such as the one addressed in this paper. Thus, taking pride in one's language is conceived of here to mean the *inner positive feeling that an indigenous language speaker experiences arising from linguistic affinities, psychological ties or economic ends regardless of the forcing external or internal factors*.

Table 1 shows that the choice of language for showing self-pride differed greatly across the groups investigated. The Fur were the group that preferred Arabic most as a language of self-pride, followed by the Masalit and Borgo, Fulani, Hausa, Borno and the Arab native language-speakers (Arab NL). Those who chose Arabic the least as a language for self-pride among this group were the Jebel, Zaghawa and Daju, who used their native languages most for showing self-pride. In equally moderate tendencies, almost all the groups accommodated both *Arabic and native* languages for the same purpose. This situation is openly expressed by, as well as by other groups, a Jebel discussant who argued that "We cannot expel Arabic out of our lives because it is part of our life. We all have to speak Arabic at schools and at market places. Our children have to learn in Arabic." However, the majority of the Zaghawa, Fur and Daju discussants expressed their dissatisfaction with the status officially given to Arabic,

compared to their languages. These arguments suggest that while many of the studied groups were showing pride in their native languages, they still admitted the indispensability of Arabic. Such a finding was also reached by Miller and Abu-Manga

(1992) in Takamul (Khartoum), where their respondents were well absorbed by linguistic arabicisation processes, but with some degree of sentimentality to their native languages.

Table (1): Language used for showing self-assertion in public across ethnic groups

		Arabic		Both Arabic and native language		Native language		English	
		Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
Ethnicity	Fur	64	47.4%	34	25.2%	30	22.2%	7	5.2%
	Masalit	34	44.2%	27	35.1%	9	11.7%	7	9.1%
	Zaghawa	28	22.0%	40	31.5%	49	38.6%	10	7.9%
	Daju	19	21.1%	40	44.4%	25	27.8%	6	6.7%
	Fulani	30	40.0%	20	26.7%	19	25.3%	6	8.0%
	Borgo	21	44.7%	18	38.3%	5	10.6%	3	6.4%
	Borno	15	36.6%	13	31.7%	8	19.5%	5	12.2%
	Jebel	12	25.5%	15	31.9%	14	29.8%	6	12.8%
	Arab NL-speakers	12	35.3%	15	44.1%	3	8.8%	4	11.8%
	Hausa	16	37.2%	13	30.2%	11	25.6%	3	7.0%

Conceived of in the context of the present paper, it is argued that aversion towards Arabic cannot only be developed due to purely linguistic issues. Socio-political and socioeconomic issues prevailing in Sudan at large, and in Darfur in particular, manifest the polemical ethnic-ridden nature of the conflict between the Arabs and non-Arabs. In other words, taking pride in indigenous languages goes against the ubiquitously observed phenomenon of preference for Arabic among many speech communities previously studied by other researchers. As such, it is assumed that redevelopment of positive attitudes towards native

languages on the part of the speakers of these languages at the cost of Arabic would not happen without no good reason.

The concept of taking language as a source of personal pride is also associated with the theory of linguistic habitus, which was coined by Bourdieu (1991). This theory stipulates that a person's position is not only defined in terms of his or her social class but, rather, defined in terms of cultural, social and symbolic capitals. Nested within the social capital is language. More pertinent to the premise of this theory is the assumed role that language plays in shaping the perceived status of one's language

as a source of personal pride until; finally, the linguistic habitus is experienced. In the context of Sudan, where linguistic, cultural and social arabicisation processes have long been operated, and directly been experienced by the indigenous ethnolinguistic communities, it is assumed that taking pride in Arabic should outweigh taking pride in any other native language. However, the findings reached in the present paper contradict the expected perceptions of Arabic on the part of native language speakers. When the linguistic habitus theory fails to communicate the perceived instrumentality of the language minorities are likely to perceive of as their linguistic habitus, many

questions are called into play, not the least of which is the ability of Arabic to negotiate genuine nationalistic roles.

4.2 Language of self-assertion according to native proficiency

Figures in Table 2 illustrate that native language proficiency extremes among the groups under study can be subsumed under three slightly distinct categories:

- 1.High vitality groups, represented by the Fur, Zaghawa, Arab native language-speakers and Fulani;
- 2.Moderate vitality groups, represented by Masalit, and Hausa; and
- 3.Low vitality groups, represented by the Borno and Daju

Table (2): Ethnicity and native language proficiency

		Native language proficiency							
		Have a good command		Somehow proficient		Have a passive knowledge		Know nothing	
		Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
Ethnicity	Fur	97	71.9%	20	14.8%	9	6.7%	9	6.7%
	Masalit	26	33.8%	12	15.6%	22	28.6%	17	22.1%
	Zaghawa	84	65.6%	24	18.8%	9	7.0%	11	8.6%
	Daju	17	18.9%	25	27.8%	34	37.8%	14	15.6%
	Fulani	37	49.3%	16	21.3%	16	21.3%	6	8.0%
	Borgo	15	31.9%	7	14.9%	19	40.4%	6	12.8%
	Borno	9	22.0%	4	9.8%	22	53.7%	6	14.6%
	Jebel	17	36.2%	14	29.8%	15	31.9%	1	2.1%
	Arab NL-speakers	18	52.9%	7	20.6%	8	23.5%	1	2.9%
	Hausa	12	27.9%	13	30.2%	18	41.9%	0	.0%

On the face of it, this table suggests that native language proficiency is positively correlated to the choice of

language of self-pride. However, the Fur were found to be the group having little knowledge of their

language the most (6.7%), but they were the group taking pride in Arabic the most (47.4%, Table 1). To the contrary, the Zaghawa were the second group having passive knowledge of their language (7.0%), but the least to take pride in Arabic (22.0%, Table 1). Generally, the correlation between passive knowledge of a native and taking pride in Arabic among the other groups was found to be reversely proportionate. This suggests that the greater the passive knowledge of a native language, the higher the use of Arabic was as a source of self-pride. The groups hardly prided themselves on English at all. Generally, taking pride in English across all the groups was inversely proportionate to the degree of native language proficiency except with those having a passive knowledge of native language.

To further understand patterns of language attitudes, we will review the findings gleaned from the focus group discussions in regard to the role of native language proficiency in taking pride in a language in public places. Across many of the discussants and interviewees, this was found to be determined by the media of communication, place, and purpose of communication. While the Masalit, Fur, Fulani and Daju showed language-based sensitivity towards out-groups, lest they hurt their feelings, the Zaghawa and Jebel were found less sensitive in showing self-assertion by using their own languages. Taking pride in

English was more evident among the university discussants than among the others. However, these findings suggest that the elevated status English received among the groups had little to do with its instrumentality, its status or ease of learning.

The foregoing account communicates other significant findings. The moderately high pride in Arabic expressed by some informants shows that, compared to the level of their native language proficiencies, having a good command of a native language does not necessarily entail taking more pride in that language than in Arabic. It goes without question that the firmly established status of Arabic in all domains in the country has the biggest role in gendering pride in it. Among the ethnolinguistic communities, showing a considerable degree of preference for using their native language is attributed to the high ethnolinguistic vitality they have developed. That is, the stronger the ethnolinguistic vitality among each community, the higher the pride in its own language, and vice versa.

The finding that there was a preference of taking pride in English, though insignificantly, across almost all of the discussants is very appealing. Taking pride in and showing self-assertion by using English was found to be a common trend among the groups investigated. Though not institutionally supported, English is gaining a solid

ground among the internally displaced persons. While crisscrossing lanes in the camps during the field visits, I was usually prompted by children to respond to their 'Hellos', 'Welcomes', and 'Bye-byes' lisped in English. To the IDPs, English symbolises food and security and, perhaps a 'saviour'. For example, a Daju discussant asserted that "The displaced persons blindly trust the foreign relief workers regardless of what harm they are doing to the IDPs in the long run. If given by a foreign relief worker, a heap of this [pointing to a heap of dung] is much more appreciated than anything of value given by any Sudanese fellowman. Humanitarian workers are providing many things to the displaced persons." This suggest that English is gaining ground among the IPDs not only for its mere instrumental reasons, but for reasons associated with provision of food, health services and security as well.

4.3. Language of self-assertion according to native language use in public

Table 3 shows that expressing self-assertion by using native language in

public was rarely registered among the Fur, Daju, Borgo, Jebel and Hausa. The same groups reported that they had never taken pride in their native languages in public places. The Hausa were the group taking pride in using their language the least in public. Similarly, the Borgo were found to be the group *never* taking pride in their language in public places. On the contrary, the Zaghawa were the group most *sometimes* used their language in public places. This common trend among this community was reported in other studies (Jahalla, 2001), where the Zaghawa were found to be the group most characterised by ethnolinguistic vitality. The other communities fluctuated, with equally moderate degrees, either *sometimes* or *seldom* took pride in their own languages. In addition, a great number of the Arab native language-speakers took pride in their native languages, as high as the Zaghawa. The Masalit, Daju and Fulani were found to be the second group *usually* taking pride in speaking their languages in public places.

Table (3): Showing self assertion by using native language in public

		Usually		Sometimes		Seldom		Never	
		Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
Ethnicity	Fur	3	2.2%	45	33.3%	41	30.4%	46	34.1%
	Masalit	8	10.4%	27	35.1%	9	11.7%	33	42.9%
	Zaghawa	25	19.5%	64	50.0%	26	20.3%	13	10.2%
	Daju	3	3.3%	21	23.3%	22	24.4%	44	48.9%
	Fulani	9	12.0%	16	21.3%	13	17.3%	37	49.3%
	Borgo	2	4.3%	3	6.4%	5	10.6%	37	78.7%

	Borno	1	2.4%	0	.0%	9	22.0%	31	75.6%
	Jebel	4	8.5%	16	34.0%	8	17.0%	19	40.4%
	Arab NL-speakers	7	20.6%	5	14.7%	11	32.4%	11	32.4%
	Hausa	1	2.3%	15	34.9%	3	7.0%	24	55.8%

The above findings were further strengthened by some data gleaned from some of the interviewees. For example, a Fur interviewee maintained that the Fur were usually too shy to hurt others by speaking Fur in public. He further added that the Fur rarely showed their ethnic identity by any means, let alone by speaking their language in public places. However, his argument that the Fur were revitalising their language in resistance to the “forceful arabicisation that the government is adopting” goes against the very weak inclination of the Fur to use their language in public places as demonstrated in Table 3 above. Similarly, a Masalit interviewee reported that the Masalit were never language-insensitive towards others. To the contrary, a Jebel discussant reported that the Jebel people insist on speaking their language wherever they went; “Our language makes us exuberant while chatting, but when we feel that something might go *wrong*, we immediately switch to English,” he said. When asked if they could chat in English, many gave an uncontrolled belly laugh and explained: “It is our language, not the English of Englishmen. Here, we call our language *English*.” In the IDPs camps, one can guess

situations where the IDPs feel that there might go something *wrong*. The only way to restore this wrong situation is, if it arises, to use a native language in public. Similarly, a Daju, for example, an interviewee also stated that the Daju person will immediately pun when suspects in the IDPs are identified.

Of interest are the Daju university discussants who said they felt self-assertive by using their language, though they all had only a passive or no knowledge of their native language (except one who was originally from South Kordofan State where Daju is still vigorously spoken). All of the discussants said they would feel more self-assertive and elevated when they listened to a group of elderly people talking in Daju. “That’s why we are now learning our language from our colleague from South Kordofan State,” a Daju discussant said. I also sensed such a tendency when I had traced a 15-year-old Daju respondent studying at Owaisha Secondary School for Girls in Bilail. She reported that she spoke Daju fluently at home. When asked in the classroom about the one claiming mastery of Daju, two Daju girls promptly replied. Opposite to this example was the case of a Shwai respondent studying in Al-Salam

Camp Basic School for Boys. When traced, the respondent did not only deny speaking his own language, but also that none of his family members spoke Shwai. However, his peers argued that his elder family members spoke their own language. Concealing one's own linguistic background was found to be related to the social situations in which minority language speakers suffer double stigma: speaking a minority language and further minoritised by bigger minorities.

Revitalising positive attitudes towards native languages was not only observed among the widely known ethnolinguistic communities in the study area. For example, while interviewing an elderly Kanuri-speaker named Shuaibo at Nyala Sugar Store site, a Bilala person approached and asked me if he too could be interviewed. To the astonishment of all the attendees, Hussein was a Naba-speaker from a Bilala ethnicity though he was a life-long peer of the group and had been living in Nyala for over twenty-two years. None of his peers had ever known this fact before. Not only was it the first time Hussein's ethnic identity was made known, but also his pride in his language. Hussein's insistence on being interviewed was made on the ground that, "If the elderly Shuaibo, the Borno, tells the others [me and the attendees] about his language, then why shouldn't I? Nowadays everyone must tell others who he is," he contended. Interestingly, the present researcher

has not come across any study showing linguistic repertoires of the Bilala in Sudan except the one done by Khalifa (2008) in Inqaz, Khartoum.

The Fulani discussants were the group most keen on propagating and glorifying their language. Every time and then, while taking part in the discussion, they wanted to teach me several phrases and words, precisely related to pastoral life. I often tried to distract them, but in vain. This is reminiscent of Dyab's (2001: 16) point: the Fulani are fervent loyalists to their language, Fulfulde, to the extent that they match deserting it to that of shunning one's own parents.

In the camps, feeling self-assertive by using one's own language looked to be a fashion, particularly among the young children. A Daju interviewee, an owner of two private basic schools in Bilail Locality, reported that he had banned speaking in local languages at his schools because the pupils were always complaining that they provoked one another in their local languages. He further admitted that his pupils were developing a sense for revitalising their languages, which was primarily associated with the current conflict. Even the children, including the Daju children, whose language was on the verge of extinction, he said, were learning how to equivocate more precisely in particular instances than the older people so that infiltrators could easily be identified.

The University of Nyala was found to be a place conducive to developing positive attitudes towards native languages. The Cultural Affairs Officer in the university reported that during the annual welcome or farewell celebrations, students coming from ethnolinguistic groups usually delivered their programmes in their mother tongues rather than in Arabic. It was also observed that almost all the Student Associations were exclusively representative of ethnic groups. The Cultural Affairs Officer counted to me over thirty student associations, all of which were either exclusively ethnolinguistic or exclusively Arab student associations, making it plausible to conclude that ethnicisation processes across the region are also reflected inside the university.

Preferences of choice in language of self-pride among the investigated groups in the context of the conflict in Darfur speak much more to the threat thesis. This thesis was tested by Geogo and Watson-Geogo (1999) among the Kawara'ae-speakers in the Solomon Islands. They found that the Kawara'ae-speakers rejected community development programmes delivered in English because they believed that English would replace their language. The premise of this thesis stipulates that when speech communities feel coerced by a dominant language, they perceive this as a direct threat to theirs. Data obtained from the

discussions support the premise of the threat thesis. Except among the Fulani, and with a lesser degree the Masalit and Borno, the vast majority of the discussants admitted that showing self-assertion by using mother tongue was reasoned by an emerging collective antipathy towards the Arabs and Arabic alike. The link between the threads of this antipathy was not straightforward, but it is likely that dichotomizing ethnic groups in the conflict by terms such as Arabs/non-Arabs, for so it was often said in the IDPs camps, cannot be ruled out. For example, a Jebel discussant heckled his fellowman who was answering a question on how differently they had felt by using the Jebel language at schools or at market places: "A Jebel person does not change [his linguistic identity] whether he is at home, school or university. We speak our language anywhere so that they won't be able to colonise us again." When asked if he could identify those who might "colonise" them again, he retorted with an unfriendly look and asked: "Can you [pointing at me] see in this camp [Al-Salam Camp] any light-coloured person like you? You should ask yourself this question". In a similar vein, a Zaghawa discussant also frankly contended that: "As you see, all the displaced persons are purely *rattaana* [vernacular-speakers] except those like Abu-Darag who don't have a native language, but they are also displaced like us." It is true that all the IDPs across the

Greater Darfur are non-Arabs, except for a small group of Huutiya Arabs who were displaced, following internecine strife with their own kinsmen in 2006, to Al-Salam Camp in Zalingei.

It is unclear why the Fur, Jebel, Hausa, and Borno did not use, as shown in Table 3, their native languages widely in public though the majority of them were, except the Hausa, confined in the IDPs where ethnic belongingness was basically observed according to language. A similar unexpected finding was the high number of the Masalit who preferred native language use in public. Findings reached by Jahalla (2001) in Al-Fashir town and by Mugaddam (2002) in Khartoum showed that the Masalit were the group whose progressing shift from their mother tongue to Arabic was the greatest. The Masalit in Al-Fashir had already undergone a complete shift to Arabic (Jahalla, *ibid.*). Accordingly, it was assumed that this group would have been the least likely group among those who reported preference of using native language in public places. However, this new tendency can be explained in contexts specific to the Masalit in the present study area. The Masalit IDPs, mostly settled in Al-Salam Camp, came from the southernmost peripheries of South Darfur State. In their homeland, native language maintenance must have been high. Upon arrival at the camps, the Masalit – as is the case with other

IDPs – settled in exclusively ethnic-based quarters, thus making the environment highly conducive to the maintenance of their language.

By and large, the emergence of a perceived pride in a native language or Arabic on the part of most of the studied groups suggests that there are revitalised native language use undercurrents in different domains. With the winds of ethnic changes effected by the prolonged arabicisation processes in operation since 1956, we can imagine that tendencies to taking pride in a native language would have been diluted, if not altogether eliminated. Accordingly, findings reached in this paper are linguistically revealing. When brought under close scrutiny, in particular by connecting these findings with the prevailing ethnic conflict in Darfur, we can forward some telling conclusions. Deep within the interacting factors working to revitalise ethnicity, pride in indigenous languages speaks to the existence of parallel native language revitalisation undercurrents. This finding, however, contradicts previous findings obtained in Sudan by many studies conducted on language attitudes and language maintenance among speech communities whose languages were found to be giving way to Arabic.

Intuitively, and in everyday commonalities, a Jebel or a Masalit person would not take pride in his or her mother tongue or expresses affiliation to his or her ethnicity on a

television show and say “We, the Jebel/ Masalit, are...,” for this is taken as a taboo. Over time, such as ethnic-based derogatoriness have subtly been internalised and become a part of societal conventions with the support of media. Through media people can assign words which might designate a particular action to a group, either negatively or positively (Thornborrow, 1999: 35). Media in Sudan is a perfect example. It has established conventional referents and roles assigned to particular group of people, events, actions or situations. Over time, these have become established and deeply rooted in the Sudanese culture. Thus, it is surprising that such long-entrenched positive attitudes are quickly undone amidst the conflicting Darfur.

In retrospect, I argue, ethnolinguistic sentiments must have been dormant among the ethnolinguistic communities, but kept deep in their central egos. Otherwise, how does it come into existence such a strong sentiment and pride towards native languages after all these years of linguistic, social and cultural arabicisation? What was missing among these groups, and recently has come to the surface, is just the trigger – the conflict. Now with this dormant “lingostalgia” being triggered by the eruption of conflict, resulting in community ethnicisation and fragmentation, language has become a source of ethnic pride. And with it, positive attitudes

towards native languages are internalised.

Again, that the Daju are revitalising their language is a significant finding. The Daju, who are believed to be characterised by low ethnolinguistic vitality, preferred using their native language to feel self-assertive. Proficiency and wide use of Daju, as shown above, also go against the generally observed recession of the Daju language among children and youth. An informed interviewee explained that Daju is giving way to Arabic, particularly among the second and third generations in Nyala city and the satellite villages to the South Darfur. What is implied by the current findings is that the Daju language is being revitalised amid the community ethnicisation processes in Darfur. The Daju themselves are strongly believed to be experiencing a process of reversing language shift which coincided with the process of ethnic revitalisation in Darfur. However, the degree of this reversing shift is not investigated in this paper.

4.4. Gender-based differences in language attitudes

This section specifically looks into language attitudes from a gender-based perspective. In communities like Darfur, where gender-specific roles are conventionally designated, the choice of language as a means for communication by men and women are expected to differ. Functionality of the chosen language as a channel for showing self-

assertion is determined by the way men and women like to be identified and looked at by others, as well as the way they like to express themselves to others. In everyday life activities, women were more involved in subsistence activities than men in the IDPs camps. In varying degrees, this was also the case in Nyala town, where women were exposed to continuous instances of interaction (market or work places, schools, etc.).

Table 4 shows the overall repertoire of taking pride in the tested languages according to sex. It is evident that Arabic was used for self-assertion by the females more than males. While English was nearly equally chosen as a language of self-pride by the females and males there was an apparent discrepancy between the two groups in almost all the other language preferences for showing self-assertion. Males tended to prefer native languages more, followed by both *Arabic* and *native languages* and finally *Arabic*. Inversely, females were the least *native*

language-only and both *Arabic* and *native language* users. On average, the two groups were divergent in every preference of language of self-pride except for English. Females tended to use Arabic only to show self-pride more than males, whereas males tended more to choose native languages only. Higher preference and shift to Arabic among women than men were also found in many studies (Jahalla, 2001; Mugaddam, 2006 and Idris, 2007).

Across all the female discussants, positive attitudes towards Arabic were the trends most noticed. Daju and Zaghawa women were inclined to choose Arabic as their language of self-pride in public, however. As for the males, the Fur and Masalit were the groups who most tended to use Arabic for the same purpose. This tendency was also supported by the university Masalit students in the discussion sessions. Inclination of women to pride in Arabic was, they reported, normally attributed to the fact that their involvement in petty trades was often greater than men.

Table (4): Choice of the language of self-assertion according to sex

		Sex			
		Female		Male	
		Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
Preferred language of self-assertion in public	Arabic	143	57.0%	108	43.0%
	Both Arabic and Native language	88	37.4%	147	62.6%
	Native language	54	31.2%	119	68.8%
	English	27	47.4%	30	52.6%

Of interest was the story of a Masalit tea-maker who argued that if she was found publicly taking pride in Arabic, many of her clients, including her kinsmen, would not buy her tea. She further resented such a situation, lamenting that "Some clients will never come back to you again if they discern that you are tongue-tied or a native language speaker." The tea-maker explicitly expressed that economic or social pressures forced her to conceal her linguistic identity. The point that the tea-makers' kinsmen would refrain from buying her tea if they had discerned that she was not fluent in Masalit seems very unusual. Such a language-based antipathy is likely to be posed by a person belonging to an out-group who despises the 'gibberish Arabic' which many vernacular-speakers in Darfur are characterised by, not by a vernacular-speaking kinsman.

5. Conclusion

The foregoing analysis and discussion show that there are varying degrees of language attitudes among the ten ethnolinguistic communities studied in South Darfur State. However, two types of attitudes were found to be significant: a revitalised simmering positive attitude toward native languages and a mild aversion developed towards Arabic.

Within the revitalised attitudes, there appear three different attitude permutations: strong native-language-only attitudes developed by the Fur, Zaghawa, Jebel and Daju. Except for the Daju, whose language is giving way to Arabic, the findings suggest that there is a strong correlation between strong ethnolinguistic vitality and developing a strong attitude towards one's own language. With the Daju, however, they are not only developing positive attitudes towards their language, but also experiencing a stage of reversing shift to their language. Next in the permutation comes strong dual attitudes shown by Borno, Arab native language-speakers, Masalit and Fulani. These groups show nearly accommodative attitudes towards both Arabic and their languages, but are also absorbed by the wholesale ethnicisation processes currently sweeping Darfur. The last group holds a weak native-language-only attitude and a moderate/positive attitude towards Arabic. They are the Hausa and Borgo. However, the finding that the Hausa are neither characterised by ethnolinguistic vitality nor are they developing a positive attitude towards their language looks unusual.

It is evident that emergence of the above three language attitude repertoires has a relationship with the spill over of the current conflict in Darfur. Ethnolinguistic communities are now being pulled by the irresistible power of ethnic solidarity, i.e. language, but are also restrained by the time-honoured instrumentality of Arabic.

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